

RELIGION:

OR, THE

LIBERTINE Repentant.

A RHAPSODY.

GEORGE ALEXANDER STEVENS.

L O N D O N :

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TO THE
READER.

THE following lines were lately wrote in a fit of illness, without any intention of ever troubling the public with them; but some very incorrect copies having been dispers'd,

pers'd, unknown to the author
occasion'd this edition.

The writer has look'd on life
too long, and suffer'd too much
in it, to be anxious for the event
of these rhymes: they were
wrote neither for profit, nor re-
putation; if he gets either by
them, its more than he expected
or if he offends, its what he
never design'd.

Bath, Feb. 22, 1751.

RELIGION

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A RHAPSODY.

BRIGHT emanation of all right'ous power,
Religion! bear me to thy sacred bower;
Where fix'd in faith, by holy patience blest'd,
Calm resignation yields the wretched rest;
Where hope divine to penitence is given,
Beams in each breast, and lifts the soul to heaven.

Ye sons of shew, ye unreflecting gay,
Time-trifling youth, the splendors of a day;
Who lightly bounding o'er life's surface skim,
Monarchs of mode, and worshippers of whim.
Thus, thro' the air, the wing-poiz'd warbler sings;
Wanton thus flies, display their painted wings:

So

So struts the fowl, with eye-bespangled train,
 Like *you* self pleas'd; as pretty, and ---- as vain.
 The time must come when dress and dancing's o'er,
 And your frail forms can play the fool no more :
 E'er 'tis too late, look with religious eyes ;
 Think, think, ye faulty, and be timely wise.

Ye tender, lovely, love-inspiring race,
 Whose words are music, and whose motion grace ;
 Whose soft endearing looks insidious play,
 Feast the fond eye, and snatch the soul away.
 Ye laughing sex, who vainly wanton, rove
 Thro' the Elysium of unbounded love :
 Tho' round enamour'd crouds observant sigh,
 Watch the soft smile, and catch the glancing eye ;
 Still must you lose this sense-ensnaring form,
 And what now feeds your lover, feast a worm.
 Yet, yet, ye conscious beauty-beaming train,
 A moment think ; then, if ye dare, ---- be vain.

Dispassion'd

Dispassion'd race! ye wealthy slaves of care,
 Whose cheeks ne'er felt the trickling, tender tear;
 Whose breasts ne'er heav'd with sympathetic sigh;
 Whose hearts ne'er open'd to the asking eye.

To sons of trade, ye busy tasteless train,
 Whose God is gold, and whose religion gain;
 Your greedy minds, to social joys unknown,
 In one, dull, drudging round, rowl restless on.

Can you expect a charity from Heav'n?
 Shall you! ye stubborn hearted, be forgiv'n?
 Fruitless your sighs, repentant, will appear;
 You'll want that mercy you derided here;
 Unmov'd the Godhead will your sorrows view,
 As weeping want, on earth, was seen by you.

Star-lustred breasts, ye court-delectant race,
 Ye souls of honour, and ye sons of place,
 Beg with each blessing that attends a throne,
 On the low wealthless look contemptuous down:

Yet, spite of pride, the statesman and the slave
Rise, undistinguish'd, from the equal grave.—

Go search within for all ennobled earth ;
Go teach the tomb-bred worm respect to birth
Correct his feeding, and refine his taste :

Alas! —

Courtiers and clowns compose alike his feast.

What will avail the di'monds sparkling blaze
The glare of titles, or the vulgar's gaze,
When worn-out nature panting gasps for breath
And friends fly, frightened, from the face of death
“ To the sad sense what then can give content?
“ The sweet reflection of a life well spent.”—

Calm each great soul quits his clay-cumb'rous
Springs to the skies, and humbly waits his God
While the low wretch, by crime rais'd wealth-g
great,

Starts at life's loss ; and, frightful, meets his fate

(11)

Wide-op'ning, wild he rowls his ghastful eyes :

He shakes ; he shrinks ; and, agonizing, cries,

" Have mercy, Heav'n !—Can I its mercy share ?

" See ! grief-stab'd merit opes its bosom there :

" Hear, from the grave, the plaintive orphan's groan

" Bursts sorrowing forth, and strikes the heav'nly

" throne.

" Hark ! the lust-ruin'd fair extends her cries,

" And the found shakes along the trembling skies."

What shall we say in that great day of dread,

When the rent graves shall render back their dead ?

When, at the trumpet's sound, the clouds give way,

And the world blazes in eternal day ?

There the fierce tyrant feels th' avenging rod,

And pride sinks trembling at the sight of God ;

There suff'ring virtue happiness receives ;

There the fool'd atheist, tho' too late, believes :

The poor lost sinner hears th' eternal doom ;

And, woe appall'd, clings shudd'ring to his tomb.

Bring,

Bring, ye bright fair, your love-attending croud
 Command your slain, ye heroes, from their shroud
 Ye prime in state display your deepest schemes;
 And, ye nice wits, your fancy-forming dreams;
 Try, try, ye proud, in that tremendous hour,
 The skill of science, or the strength of pow'r,
 Self-pleasing wisdom, the renown of birth,
 All, all the vis'orary joys of earth;
 Lay them before the universal Lord;
 Go, plead your merits, and revoke his word.

Sooner shall shadows stop the light'ning's blaze
 Or glowworms dim the sun's refulgent rays.

But chiefly you to whom the word was giv'n,
 Soul-saving sect, ye delegates of Heav'n;
 Whose pious toils dispel the sinner's fear,
 Stop the throb'd sigh, and dry confession's tear.

Thus, but unpension'd, th' apostles went
 On foot, coarse clad, with homely fare content;
 Declar'd the dictates of th' almighty Lord,
 That prov'd no doctrine by the dint of sword.
 Love, justice, faith, humility they press'd,
 Yet threaten'd no damnation to the rest.
 Plain and unsully'd, like the simple maid,
 Religion bloom'd, by int'rest unallay'd:
 And truly fervent, penitence sincere,
 And the wrap'd soul, and spoke the heart-felt
 pray'r.

Then social bliss descended from above,
 And thro' each sex, and ripen'd into love:
 No sign'd desires fed th' heavenly flame;
 And blaz'd the passion, as from God it came:
 All beings then with mutual rapture strove;
 And was religion; and religion, love.

Ye motley fons, compos'd of noise and show
 Ye beauty-haunting, glingling, glitt'ring crew;
 Tho' round the fair you ever fondly rove;
 Think not, insipids, you were form'd for love

Scorn worldly wealth, ye pray'r-deliv'ring
 Heav'n equal hears——equal dispenses place;
 With soul-felt awe adore all nature's Lord;
 Boldly proclaim his wonder-working word:
 Snatch the smooth mask from the rich
 face;

Check the gay vicious in their guilty race:
 Humble the haughty, bend the scoffer down,
 And scourge the shameless, tho' the pow'rful

Raise, tho' in rags, and lend the wretched
 Assist the friendless, and protect the poor:

Bounteous, o'er earth, the sun bestows his rays,
 Shines o'er a throne, and thro' the cottage plays :
 Bounteous thus Heav'n the gospel-light has spread ;
 Pure you receive, return it unallay'd :
 Shun the mean wrangling, fyllogistic rules ;
 Scorn quibbling logic, and the modes of schools ;
 Free from dull, learned jargon, plainly preach,
 And act with ardour up to what you teach.

Ye congregated lay, who duly creep
 As the bell tolls for church—to fall asleep.

Ye well-dress'd train who modishly resort,
 And treat the temple as you use the court.

Ye senseless rude who, with affrontive stare,
 Stare on the meek beauty in her hour of pray'r.

Ye

Ye empty idlings, who insipid smile,
 Prettily pacing thro' the sounding isle ;
 Devotion's hour, loit'ring, laugh away ;
 Too nice to kneel, and much too proud to pray,

No more, ye vain, the sacred dome debase,
 Wanton with worship, and your God disgrace ;
 With me fall prostrate——penitent adore ;
 Confess your errors, and offend no more.

By chance condemn'd to wander from my birth
 An erring exile, o'er the face of earth,
 Wild thro' the world of vice;---licentious race
 I've started folly, and enjoy'd the chase :
 Pleas'd with each passion, I pursu'd their aim,
 Cheer'd the gay pack, and grasp'd the gaudy
 game ;

Revel'd regardless, leap'd reflection o'er,
 'Till youth, 'till health, fame, fortune, are no
 more :

Too late I feel the thought-corroding pain
 Of sharp remembrance, and severe disdain:
 Each painted pleasure its avenger breeds;
 Sorrow's sad train, to riot's troop succeeds:
 Slow wasting sickness steals on swift debauch;
 Contempt on pride, pale wants on waste approach:
 Scorn'd by the sad, the cynic, and the dull,
 The wou'd-be wit, and milky minded fool.

Eternal Good! from Thee our hope descends;
 With Thee it centers, and in Thee it ends:
 To Thee, with shame-torn heart, I trembling kneel;
 Heal me with mercy; oh! my Saviour, heal!
 Great Lord of life, if daring I request,
 Still let me sigh among mankind unblest'd;

Still

Still sickness, shipwrecks, prisons, plagues to know
Whate'er my fate is—still my faith's in you:
Still shall thy name attune thy suppliant's song;
Still shall thy praise dwell rapt'rous on his tongue
Wretched or bless'd, still shall I always own,
Whate'er I feel, Heav'n's holy will be done.

F I N I S.

